

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 ACDA-07
DHA-05 AID-05 IGA-02 MCE-00 /112 W
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R 131206Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5585
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 5434

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, US, ET, SO, OAU
SUBJ: POST AND HENZE MEETING WITH OAU ASST SEC GEN

SUMMARY: OAU ASST SEC GEN PETER ONU TOLD AF/E DIRECTOR
POST AND NSC STAFF MEMBER HENZE SEPT 9 HE BELIEVED ETHIOPIA
BEGINNING TO REALIZE ITS PAST MISTAKES. DEFECTION OF POMOA
LEFTISTS GAVE MENGISTU NEW LEVERAGE TO REVERT TO NONALIGN-
MENT AND GREATER PRAGMATISM IN HIS POLICY DECISIONS. US
SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS CHANGE OF HEART AND REASSERT
ITS PRESENCE. SOVIET STRONGHOLD WAS NOT IRREVOCABLE, DES-
PITES ITS GROWING TILT TOWARDS ETHIOPIA IN OGADEN DISPUTE.
ONU SAID OAU GOOD OFFICES COMMITTEE WOULD MAKE FURTHER EFFORT
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TO MEDIAT WITH SOMALIS, BUT HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT
PROSPECTS FOR CEASEFIRE. HE FAVORED SOME JOINT US-USSR
EFFORT TOWARD STOPPING WAR AND EXPRESSED OAU SATISFAC-
TION OVER US DECISION TO DEFER ARMS SHIPMENTS TO
SOMALIA UNTIL FIGHTING STOPPED. IN ONU'S VIEW, ETHIO-
PIA'S BEST HOPE FOR RETAINING ERITREA UNDER FEDERAL
ARRANGEMENT LAY IN IRRECONCILABILITY OF INSURGENT GROUPS,

BUT HE DOUBTED MUCH PROGRESS TOWARD PEACEFUL SOLUTION,
SO LONG AS ERITREANS WERE WINNING. END SUMMARY.

1. OGADEN MEDIATION - ONU SAID THAT DESPITE MALAGASY,
CONGOLESE AND OAU EFFORTS, NO SOLUTION WAS IMMINENT
AND PROBLEM EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. SOMALIS STILL CLAIMED
THEY WERE NOT PARTY TO DISPUTE AND IN ANY EVENT HAD
ENTERED RESERVATION TO 1964 OAU RESOLUTION REGARDING
RESPECT FOR BOUDARIES. DESPITE DIFFERENCES IN LEGAL
INTERPRETATION, OAU TOOK POSITION THAT IF NEARLY ALL
MEMBER STATES SUBSCRIBED TO RESOLUTION AND ONE OR TWO
RESERVED, RESOLUTION WAS BINDING FOR ALL. ONU FORESAW
CHAOS OVER ALL AFRICA IF SOMALIA WERE TO TAKE OGADEN
AND BE PERMITTED TO KEEP IT. ONU POINTED OUT THAT IN
1973 DURING OAU TENTH ANNIVERSARY MEETING, ETHIOPIA
HAD ACKNOWLEDGED POSSIBILITY THAT ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA
MIGHT HAVE BOUNDARY PROBLEM, BUT CERTAINLY NOT TERRI-
TORIAL PROBLEM. ONU EXPECTED GOOD OFFICES COMMITTEE
CHAIRMAN OBASANJO TO MAKE FURTHER EFFORT TOWARD MEDIA-
TION, POSSIBLY IN FORM OF SEEKING CEASEFIRE, BUT HE
PERSONALLY CONSIDERED CEASEFIRE IDEA NOT PRACTICAL AT
PRESENT, SINCE ETHIOPIA WOULD NOT AGREE TO CEASEFIRE IN
PLACE AND SOMALIA WOULD NOT AGREE TO CEASEFIRE AND WITH-
DRAWAL.

2. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO BELLIGERENTS - MR. HENZE
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SAID IT WAS DEPRESSING THAT SO MANY ADDITIONAL WEAPONS
WERE COMING INTO BOTH COUNTRIES. POST NOTED THAT ONE
WAY TO MAKE CEASEFIRE WAS TO TURN OFF FLOW OF FOREIGN
ARMS. OF COURSE, US HAD ALSO SUPPLIED ARMS TO ETHIO-
PIA, BUT AT TIME WHEN THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF IMMI-
NENT CONFLICT. SOVIETS, ON OTHER THAND, SUPPLYING BOTH
SIDES. ONU SAW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EPMG AND SOMALI
POSITIONS. ETHIOPIA WAS CLEARLY VICTIM OF AGGRESSIVE
ACTIONS SUPPORTED BY CERTAIN ARAB COUNTRIES. EVEN IN
ERITREA, WHERE IT WAS ESSENTIALLY DOMESTIC DISPUTE,
INSURGENTS WERE AIDED AND ABETTED BY ARAB COUNTRIES AND
SUDAN WAS OPENLY IN SUPPORT OF SECESSIONISTS. SAME ARAB
GROUP WAS NOW BEHIND SOMALIA, AND ETHIOPIA HAD NO CHOICE
BUT TO SEEK BEST MEANS POSSIBLE TO DEFEND ITS TERRITORY.
TO BE SURE, IT HAD CHOSEN TO CUT OFF RELATIONSHIP WITH
US AND WAS NOW TURNING TO SOVIETS. LATTER HAD COME IN
WITH ARMS TO BOTH SIDES, BUT IT APPEARED TO ONU THAT
SOVIETS WERE BEGINNING TO LEAN MORE IN DIRECTION OF
ETHIOPIA. HENZE NOTED THAT SOVIET ARMS STILL SEEMED TO
BE COMING INTO SOMALIA AS WELL, BUT THOUGHT ARMS WOULD
SLOW DOWN SHORTLY.

3. ERITREA - ONU SUGGESTED EPMG BEGINNING TO REALIZE ITS PAST POLICY MISTAKEN. HENZE ASKED WHETHER THIS CHANGE WOULD BE TOO LATE TO HELP ERITREA SOLUTION. ONU FEARED SO. EVEN IN EVENT OF COMPLETE INSURGENT SUCCESS, HE FORESAW SERIOUS CIVIL WAR BREAKING OUT IN ERITREA SHORTLY THEREAFTER. FOR EXAMPLE, EPLF, WHICH WAS DOING MOST OF THE FIGHTING THESE DAYS, WAS COMPOSED PRIMARILY OF CHRISTIANS WHO WERE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT ARAB LAKE CONCEPT FOR RED SEA. SUDAN WAS TRYING TO GET THREE INSURGENT GROUPS TOGETHER BUT PROSPECT WAS DOUBTFUL. THIS DIFFERENCE AMONG INSURGENTS STILL PROVIDED ETHIOPIA'S BIGGEST HOPE. THE 1976 NINE-PINT PROPOSAL CONTAINED REASONABLE ELEMENTS, BUT NOW RUNS INTO FACT THAT INSURGENTS WINNING, AND THIS PLUS EXTENT OF

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BLOOD SHED MAKE IT UNLIKELY THEY WOULD ACCEPT ANYTHING SHORT OF INDEPENDENCE. ONU TOOK VIEW THAT FEDERAL SYSTEM FOR ETHIOPIA MADE MOST SENSE. HE FOR ONE EXPECTED CREATION OF FEDERAL SYSTEM AFTER 1974 REVOLUTION, BUT EPMG NEVER WENT THAT ROUTE. ARGUMENT HAD BEEN THAT SOME AREAS OF COUNTRY WERE TOO BACKWARD AND THAT IT NOT FEASIBLE TO IMPOSE STATE SYSTEM ON THEM. BUT OTHER EQUALLY BACKWARD COUNTRIES HAD DONE SO, AND IT WAS NOT TOO LATE TO CONSIDER THIS IDEA. AS NIGERIA KNEW, FEDERAL SYSTEM WAS EXPENSIVE (SEPARATE LEGISLATURES, BUREAUCRACIES, ETC.), BUT IT DOES PROVIDE STABILITY.

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4. MENGISTU - HENZE WONDERED WHETHER, IF ETHIOPIA WERE SUCCESSFUL IN PUSHING SOMALIA BACK FROM OGADEN, EPMG WOULD MAKE ANY CHANGES IN ITS PREVIOUS APPROACH TO DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. ONU WAS NOT SO SURE. HE CHARACTERIZED MENGISTU UNTIL RECENTLY AS QUASI-PRISONER OF RELATIVELY SMALL GROUPS OF THEORETICIANS. THESE LEFTISTS HAD MANIPULATED DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY, PUSHING EPRP AND OTHERS INTO OPPOSITION. IN EFFECT, MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAD DEPARTED FROM TRADITIONAL NEUTRALIST POSTURE IN ORDER TO TAKE SIDES WITH ONE CIVILIAN FACTION. THIS HAD NOW CHANGED. THAT GROUP HAD FALLEN OUT OF FAVOR AND GOVERNMENT WAS NOW TRYING TO BE ITSELF AND TAKE A MORE PRAGMATIC APPROCH. HAD GROUP'S FALL
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HAPPENED EARLIER, ONU DOUBTED WHETHER BREAK WITH US WOULD HAVE EVER HAPPEND. ONU CAUTIONED THAT MENGISTU WAS NOT AS INTACTIBLE AS HE SEEMS. EVEN KILLING OF FORMER PMAC LEADERS HAD NOT BEEN MENGISTU'S DOING ALONE. OTHERS BENEATH HIM HAD SEEN THREAT WITHIN DIRG TO MOVE AWAY FROM RIGID IDEOLOGICAL LINE. AFTER MENGISTU TAKE-OVER, LOCAL CITIZENS HAD TO ASK THEMSELVES WHETHER THEIR LOYALTY SHOULD BE TO DIRG OR POMOA. HENZE POINTED OUT THAT THESE KILLINGS NEVERTHELESS HAD CREATED TERRIBLE IMAGE OF MENGISTU IN US AND THAT HE HAD MUCH TO LIVE DOWN. POST ADDED THAT WHILE OTHERS MAY HAVE PERSUADED MENGISTU TO TAKE UNFRIENDLY ACTIONS AGAINST US, USG HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO IDENTIFY HIM PERSONALLY WITH THESE ACTIONS. ONU ADMITTED THAT, AS HEAD OF STATE, MENGISTU MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN ETHIOPIA. MOREOVER, BREAKING UP STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WITH LIVE BULLETS WAS HARDLY ACCEPTABLE MEANS OF MAINTAINING PUBLIC SECURITY. ASKED ABOUT LONG-STANDING IMPRISONMENTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN, ONU FELT THAT UNREASONING SECURITY FEARS PROBABLY PREVENTED DIRG FROM RELEASING THEM.

5. US POLICY TOWARDS HORN - POST AND HENZE DISCUSSED EVOLUTION OF US THINKING ON SOMALIA. IN RESPONSE TO SOMALI OVERTURES, USG HAD SEEN SOME VALUE IN INDICATING TO SOMALIA THAT THEY NO LONGER NEED BE COMPLETELY DEPENDENT ON USSR. ESCALATION OF FIGHTING HAD CAUSED RE-THINKING, AND IT WAS CLEAR UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES US COULD NOT PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA. EVEN HAD OGADEN CONFLICT NOT BROKEN OUT, HENZE DOUBTED WHETHER US WOULD HAVE PROVIDED MUCH IN WAY OF ARMS TO FILL SOMALIA'S DEFENSIVE GAPS, SINCE SOMALIA WAS ALREADY ONE OF MOST HEAVILY ARMED COUNTRIES IN AFRICA. CONFIDENTIAL

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NOW, POST SAID, US HAD SIMILAR PROBLEM IN REVERSE, I.D., WITH ETHIOPIA. US DID NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY GOVERNMENT SHOULD BECOME SO CLOSELY TIED TO ONE FOREIGN COUNTRY THAT IT HAD NO PLACE ELSE TO TURN FOR ASSISTANCE. THE TWO MEN ASKED FOR ONU'S ADVICE AS TO THE US ROLE.

6. ONU NOTED THAT PUBLIC OPINION IN ETHIOPIA WAS FAR FROM ANTI-AMERICAN. HE COUNSELLED THAT US SHOULD NOT TURN ITS BACK. HE FELT THAT, AS LONG AS EPMG ITSELF TRYING TO OPEN UP NEW AVENUES, US SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE, REASSERT ITS PRESENCE, SINCE HE DOUBTED THAT SOVIET STRANGLE-HOLD WOULD PROVE TO BE SO STRONG. POST NOTED THAT US IN PROCESS OF CONCLUDING NEW AID AGREEMENTS TOTALING 12 MILLION DOLLARS, BUT THAT, BY ITS OWN ACTIONS, EPMG HAD PUT US IN POSITION WHERE IT COULD NO LONGER PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE. ONU ACKNOWLEDGED PROBLEM IN CONGRESS. AT SAME TIME, HE FREQUENTLY HEARD ETHIOPIANS REMARK THAT THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO OGADEN WAR IF US HAD NOT BEEN KICKED OUT. MAKE AN EFFORT, HE SUGGESTED. US WOULD FIND GOOD WILL AMONG ETHIOPIANS, MANY OF WHOM REGRETTED PAST ACTIONS OF EPMG. NOW WAS PROPER TIME. SOVIETS COULD NOT RIDE TWO HORSES. BEST POLICY FOR ETHIOPIA, AS FOR ALL AFRICAN STATES, WAS ONE OF NON-ALIGNMENT, BUT THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT COUNTRY MUST KEEP ALOOF FROM OTHER NATIONS.

7. ONU INDICATED THAT EPMG MIGHT ASK FOR US MILITARY SPARE PARTS, AT LEAST INDIRECTLY THROUGH THIRD COUNTRIES. POST REPLIED THAT CONGRESSIONAL PROBLEM WAS SIMILAR WITH THIRD COUNTRY TRANSFERS AS WITH DIRECT BILATERAL ASSISTANCE. POTENTIALLY WILLING SUPPLIERS TO SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA, SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND ISRAEL RESPECTIVELY, WERE AWARE THAT NOT ONLY WAS US APPROVAL NECESSARY BEFORE US-ORIGIN ARMS COULD BE TRANSFERRED, BUT ALSO NOTHING COULD BE TRANSFERRED WHICH CONFIDENTIAL

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US WAS NOT ITSELF WILLING TO PROVIDE.

8. ONU ASSUMED US WOULD NOT HAVE MUCH RESTRAINING LEVERAGE OVER SOMALIA, BUT ASKED WHETHER CONCERTED ACTION TOGETHER WITH SOVIETS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. HE FELT THAT IF US COULD PERSUADE USSR INTO JOINT ACTION TOWARDS TOPPING WAR, THIS WOULD BE STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION. POST AND HENZE POINTED OUT THAT US INFLUENCE ON BOTH SIDES WAS LIMITED, WHEREAS SOVIETS, AS PRINCIPAL SUPPLIER TO BELLIGERENTS, HAD MUCH GREATER LEVERAGE.

9. ONU SAID OAU HAD BEEN PLEASED OVER US DECISION TO DEFER ARMS SHIPMENTS TO SOMALIA. HE FELT THAT IF SOMALIA WERE SUCCESSFUL IN HOLDING ON TO OGADEN, DJIBOUTI WOULD BE NEXT VICTIM. HENZE ASSURED HIM US DID NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING IN AFRICA THAT WOULD CREATE PROBLEMS AMONG AFRICANS.

10. ONU CLOSED BY SAYING THAT VISITORS' TALKS HERE SHOULD BE HELPFUL, AND THAT US HAD CHANCE AT PRESENT TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING POSITIVE.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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SAS ID: 1301402
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, US, ET, SO, OAU, (POST, RICHARD), (HENZE, PAUL), (ONU, PETER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
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